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SUBJECT: TURKEY: POLICE LIFT CURTAIN ON ERGENEKON PROBE

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1B. ISTANBUL 505

1C. ANKARA 1337

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons: 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Turkish National Police on November 21 gave the Embassy an extensive briefing on their investigation into Ergenekon, the shadowy group alleged to have plotted an overthrow of the AKP government. The briefing presented a seamless informational overview, underscoring that Ergenekon is a vast, well-funded and well-organized network that relied on anti-West and anti-U.S. propaganda to gain adherents from extreme nationalistic circles. TNP briefers said the cache of grenades discovered in an Istanbul house in 2007 was from a manufactured series that had gone missing soon after production. The series had been traced to numerous attacks, which confirmed the link between them. Briefers emphasized the key role played by former General Veli Kucuk, who they said had personally directed several murders, as well as former ASAM think tank head Umit Ozdag. Briefers told us they view their case as "legally strong" and are confident about gaining convictions, but noted the Turkish judiciary can be unpredictable. The briefing focused on Ergenekon's anti-U.S. tilt, which suggested TNP hopes to gain USG direct or tacit support for their efforts. TNP is also certainly aware that the Turkish public appears to be rapidly losing interest in the Ergenekon trial. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Responding to a direct LEGATT request, Turkish National Police November 21 provided the Embassy with an extensive briefing, complete with visual aids, on their investigation into Ergenekon, the shadowy network that is accused of plotting a coup against the AKP government. The briefers emphasized that no other country has been offered such a detailed brief. At the briefing, LEGATT was accompanied by RA and POLCouns.

13. (C) The briefers noted that when the Ergenekon investigation began, no one had known that it would extend this far. It had all started with finding the cache of grenades in the Istanbul residence in 2007. Some of the grenades had fingerprints. The grenades were all in the same series. They were from a package that had gone astray somehow after being manufactured by MKEK, (the Mechanical and Chemical Industry Corporation, the GoT-owned firm which, among other products, produces ammunition and weapons for Turkish forces). Grenades that had been used in several attacks, including three used against the Cumhuriyet newspaper, were from the same series -- so the link between these attacks was firmly established.

14. (C) Soon afterward, the Police had discovered a huge "arsenal" in an Eskisehir house. The extent and variety of the arsenal made it clear that this was a "sizeable group." All of the materiel had come from military sources. They had also found classified reports and documents, including

proposed methods of psychological warfare against the EU and the Turkish Government. They had found evidence about a bribe paid to CHP leader Baykal. They had also found information that seemed to implicate the Neuman and Adenauer Foundations. They had discovered photos and documents relating to the sexual activities of former CHOD Buyukanit's daughter.

Extreme Nationalists Recruited

15. (C) Ergenekon had established the Kuvayi Milliye Association as its primary front organization, and had recruited members from right-wing nationalist groups whose adherents seemed appropriately extremist. It had produced various pamphlets and books, containing assertions such as:
-- Turkish civilian governments have been "the servant of the West throughout history";
-- Turkey has been "invaded" by foreigners and missionaries;
-- Democracy is not suitable for Turks; the Army has to intervene;
-- Kurds are the main source of crimes in western Turkey; the Kurdish population growth must be stopped;
-- EU and USA contacts threaten the sovereignty of the Turkish government;
-- Turkey is under the control of minorities; actions against Armenians are legitimate;
-- Selling lands to Brits and Germans and Israelis is an "invasion."

16. (C) The Police briefers stated that Ergenekon had resolved to contact various terrorist groups to advance its

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goals of fomenting chaos and instability in Turkey, and had also proposed to establish fake terrorist organizations. Its contacts included the Turkish Mafia; IBDA/C, which aims to re-establish the Caliphate; Hizbuttahrir; and DHKP/C, which "is understood" to have killed industrialist Ozdemir Sabanci on the orders of former General Veli Kucuk. The briefers said that Kucuk was implicated in several terrorism episodes, including the attack on the Danistay, the murder of Hrant Dink, and the killing of Mustafa Duyar.

17. (C) Police briefers underscored that their investigation had also found detailed sketches on the layout of the Constitutional Court, which included entryways that were known only to senior judges. (NOTE: TNP has told Legatt that the Ergenekon investigation could snare current Constitutional Court judges as well as several active-duty high-ranking military generals. END NOTE)

18. (C) Ergenekon is a sizeable and well-organized network, the briefers said, with separate branches for legal work, finances, lobbying, administration and control. Kucuk appears to have been high in the decision-making chain. Ergenekon had exploited the strong nationalist leanings of some Turkish youth. The TNP had profiled one of its members, Mustafa Bagdat, currently in a Turkish prison, and found that he: shows fascist tendencies; has an unstable character and is quick to use violence; believes the country is always facing a threat from foreigners; and feeds on radical, neo-nationalist propaganda.

Ergenekon Propaganda

19. (C) TNP briefers pointed to two men in particular who were instrumental in forging Ergenekon's propaganda: Umit Ozdag, the former head of the ASAM think tank; and Erk Yurtsever. The briefers highlighted published material which portrayed the United States -- and Ambassadors Mark Parris and Ross Wilson, in particular -- in insulting and provocative terms. They noted that Ozdag had sent an aggressive open warning to the ruling Justice and Development Party soon after it came to power: "The armed resistance

right of the people will arise if you dare to change the first four articles of the Constitution, even if you have 660 seats in Parliament." The TNP said they saw strong parallels to reactionary trends in past decades in Italy (Mafia); Greece (the Junta) and Spain (Franco).

¶10. (C) We pressed the briefers on whether they were optimistic about gaining convictions. They said they view the investigation as "legally strong," and the overall case as solid, but that Turkish judges were sometimes unpredictable. They pointed to a judge who, to the consternation of the police, had found it "reasonable" when one defendant had claimed he planned to use the grenades for fishing.

¶11. (C) We also asked about the alleged connection between Ergenekon and the PKK. The briefers replied that after the Ergenekon arrests, they had seen a rapid increase in PKK attacks on policemen and police stations. They had drawn the appropriate conclusion, they said. The symbolism seemed "clear."

¶12. (C) COMMENT: This briefing was more of an informational overview than a detailed recounting of the evidence against the Ergenekon defendants, but the TNP briefers appeared strikingly confident that they have compiled the necessary proof for a successful prosecution. Still, they also appeared relatively resigned to the prospect that the Turkish judiciary, whether manipulated or simply erratic, might prove unconvinced. The briefing's emphasis on Ergenekon's anti-West and anti-U.S. messages seemed designed to enlist USG support, whether tacit or direct, of the prosecution effort. This might reflect TNP's perception that media coverage of the trial's various fumbles has produced a negative impact on Turkish public opinion -- which recent polls confirm. TNP may also be chagrined that one Ergenekon defendant was released from prison November 18 after languishing for 17 months behind bars, and that the recent EU progress report criticized Ankara for its treatment of Ergenekon suspects. In addition, the Ergenekon prosecutor's reported weekly meetings with Prime Minister Erdogan lend credence to allegations that political motives are behind the investigation.

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